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From the Translator —

THE RAPE OF PROSERPINE :

A Poem

IN THREE BOOKS.

INCOMPLETE.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

THE PHŒNIX :

An Idyll.

AND

THE NILE :

A Fragment.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN

OF

CLAUDIUS CLAUDIANUS,

BY

HENRY E. J. HOWARD, D.D.

DEAN OF LICHFIELD.

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE DISTRIBUTION.

1854.

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P R E F A C E.

DURING the attacks of gout, a disorder to which I am subject, being incapacitated for pursuits of a more serious and strictly professional character, I have lately sought for occupation and entertainment, in composing the translations which follow, and print them in the hope, that they may be found not altogether unworthy of the perusal of those into whose hands they may come. My recurrence to Claudian for this purpose—as I have in my younger days translated several of his historical poems—may perhaps be accounted for by a passage in my relative Lord Carlisle's "Lecture on the Writings of Gray," where he says, "I believe there to be something instinctive, which leads every one of us, not to what in our unimpassioned judgment we think the best and greatest of its kind, but to what we are sensible is most specially attractive and congenial to ourselves." A translator indeed need wish for nothing better, than to be, mesmerically speaking, "*en rapport*" with his original; into whose spirit, in such a case, he could not fail to enter. A simpler reason however for liking Claudian, is that he is a good and pleasing poet, and deserves to be liked: and I am encouraged in my

preference by a *dictum*, which I find in "Notes Theological and Political, by the late S. T. Coleridge," to the effect that—"Claudian throughout would bear translation better than any of the ancients."

There are three versions of the "Raptus," with which I am acquainted, those of Digges, Hawkins, and Strutt—and, with a ready acknowledgment of many good points occurring in them all, I have felt that something remained to be done for Claudian, and offer the present contribution towards an object which doubtless is still far from being attained. The first, that of Digges, published in 1617, is a curious, and, I believe, a scarce book. There are many terse and nervous lines in it, but it sins grievously in the way of amplification, the author spinning occasionally two or three couplets out of one word of his original. I give the opening sentence of his Preface, as a specimen of his quaint style.

"Gentle reader, I present to thy view the three first Books of Claudian de Raptu Proserpinæ in an English version: a work how pleasing it may prove I know not; since of my author Scaliger saith, he was *materiâ ignobiliore oppressus*—but—*addidit de ingenio quantum defuit materiæ*—which wit the translator's harshness of style may (haply) have diminished."

I have not thought it necessary to append any notes to a Poem so purely mythological. They would have been only a transcript of the pages of

Lempriere, or Smith—to the latter of which Dictionaries I would also refer the reader for a sufficient account of Claudian and his works, coupled however with what I will venture to call a very undue depreciation of his poetical powers. He is, of course, not to be ranked among the Augustan poets, but he stands, I think, high among those of the second order; and I should be inclined to place him between Lucan and Statius, as less vigorous than the former, less tumid and grandiloquent than the latter. The *Raptus*, undisfigured by the spirit of courtly adulation, which was his besetting sin, is perhaps as fair a specimen of his real genius as can be given. There are faults in its construction; such as the omission of the communication which Jupiter ought to make to Pluto, respecting the abduction of Proserpine—the principal event of the poem: and the unartistic way in which that event is related twice over; first, as matter of direct narrative, and then again in the colloquy between Electra and Ceres—which might induce the supposition that it had never received the finishing touches from its author, and that its conclusion had never been written. I should be glad however to find this latter conjecture disproved by the labours of some future Mai, and the fourth book, containing the wanderings of Ceres, and her ultimate discovery of her daughter, rescued from the concealment of a palimpsest, to give the desired completion to so admirable a poem.

I take this opportunity of thanking my friends, the Rev. H. Moore, of Eccleshall, and the Rev. H. Bull, of Lathbury ; to whose taste and kindness I am indebted for many valuable remarks, and corrections of the present version, of which I have freely availed myself.

Donington Rectory,
October 28, 1854.

RAPE OF PROSERPINE.

PROEM, OR INTRODUCTION

TO

CLAUDIAN'S RAPE OF PROSERPINE.

HE who first taught his new-launch'd vessel's keel,
Urged by unpractised oars, the waves to part,
Or varying winds' impulsive power to feel,
A way, denied by nature, won by art.

His early trials were on calmest tides,
Nor left he far the friendly shore behind ;
Next in broad bays from cape to cape he glides,
And spreads light canvass to a gentle wind.

Till bold at last by long experience grown,
Weak fear discarded, on his course he sails,
Dares the great deep, consults the stars alone,
And braves Ægean and Ionian gales.

CLAUDIAN.
RAPE OF PROSERPINE.

BOOK I.

THE steeds of darkness, and the robber King,
My labouring spirit bids me dare to sing ;
The car, whose sickening blight the pale stars fled,
And subterranean Juno's gloomy bed.
Hence, ye profane ! all earth-born thoughts are gone,
And Phœbus reigns within my breast, alone.
See ! the shrines tremble : through the proud abode
Clear streams of light attest the coming God !
The deep earth groans ! Cecropia's temple rings,
And high her holy brands Eleusis flings !
Thy snakes, Triptolemus, with hissing tongue,
Lift their worn necks, and, as they glide along,
Incline their rosy crests, and listen to the song.

Behold, in triple majesty sublime
 Arises Hecatē ; and in his prime
 Mild Bacchus, with the ringlets ivy-crown'd ;
 The Parthian tiger's hide his limbs hath bound,
 Clasp'd by the golden claws that o'er it meet :
 Maconia's Thyrsus guides his staggering feet.

Ye, on whose bidding wait the listless crew
 Of vast Avernus—to whose stores are due
 The perish'd things of earth—dark powers, who fix
 Your sullen residence by livid Styx,
 Or where, mid smoke and fiery spray, whirl on
 The panting waves of eddying Phlegethon—
 Uplift the veil of mystery—proclaim
 The secrets of your heaven—how glow'd Love's flame
 In Pluto's breast—by what compulsion led,
 (Chaos her dower) coy Proserpine was wed :
 Far o'er how many lands her Mother stray'd,
 And sought, with anxious quest, the stolen maid :
 Whence laws the nations gain'd, and pleased forsook
 For new-discover'd corn Dodona's oak.

Dire was the burst of swelling wrath, that drove
 Hell's Lord with war to menace Heaven above.
 He could not brook a solitary throne,
 Condemn'd to waste his sterile years alone,

Denied the bridal couch, the mutual flame,
 The husband's bliss, the father's soothing name.
 The monstrous inmates of profoundest Hell
 Fired by his wrongs, the black battalia swell :
 Tisiphone, her Fury ranks amid—
 Her lowering brow by cluster'd serpents hid—
 Waves her ill-omen'd torch ; and, armed all,
 The grisly Manes gather at her call.
 Almost had then each warring element
 In wild divorce the ties that bound them rent :
 Almost the Giant brood had dash'd away
 Their prison bars, and gazed upon the day ;
 And scarr'd Ægeon, bursting from his bands,
 Hurl'd back the lightnings with his hundred hands.
 But, trembling for the world, the Fates forbade
 The threaten'd ill ; at Pluto's feet they laid
 Their hair, severe and hoary—and his knees
 Clasp'd with those hands that rule our destinies,
 Sway Time and Death, the distaff and the shears,
 And guide the cycles of unfailing years.

First Lachesis, her streaming locks undight—
 Address'd the King—"O Arbiter of Night,
 And Lord of Shades—to whom our labours tend,
 Who giv'st to all their origin and end,

Sway'd by whose will the laws of change supply
 The countless myriads that are born and die—
 Ruler of Life and Death—for whatsoe'er
 Matter produces, is thy gift and care ;
 By thee created, it returns to thee,
 And souls with bodies mix, or are for ages free :
 Oh ! break not thou the bonds of peace and love,
 Which erst for you our favouring spindles wove ;
 Nor 'gainst your kindred compact raise around
 Rebellion's banners, nor its trumpet sound !
 Be not with Earth's unhallow'd brood allied—
 But ask of Jove, and He shall give the bride."

Scarce had she ceased, when o'er his haughty brow
 Remorse and pity shed their mingled glow,
 And the stern mind relaxed, untaught before to bow.
 So, when fierce Boreas arms him with the gale,
 And crusts his pinions o'er with Getic hail,
 When, rough with snows and ice, he longs to sweep
 In sounding ruin o'er the land and deep—
 If then should Æolus—ere yet too late—
 Against his egress close the brazen gate,
 Stopt in their course the tempests cease to rave,
 And sink repulsed within their guarded cave.

Then Maia's son, to do his prompt command
 He bids be summon'd ; Hermes waits at hand,
 With winged cap, and sleep-compelling wand.
 In gloomy state upon his rugged throne
 He sits ; his sceptre with foul rust o'ergrown
 Uncouth and massive in his hand he rears ;
 Girt with a dismal cloud more dire appears
 His lofty head ; there grief with terror blends,
 And to that shape severe a stony stiffness lends.

Then forth there came a voice : as peal'd its sound,
 A shuddering silence fill'd the halls around :
 Hush'd was the barking of that warder fell,
 Three-headed Cerberus ; Cocytus, well
 Of darkly flowing tears, their flow repress ;
 Ceased Acheron to moan, sank Phlegethon to rest.

“ Arcadian child of Atlas, link that bindest
 This nether realm to Heaven, that only findest
 Permitted access to both worlds, and art
 The licensed merchant of their common mart—
 Go, in thy speed surpass the rapid air,
 And thus to haughty Jove my mandate bear.
 ‘ So far hath fortune bow'd me to thy sway,
 And taken with the heavens my power away,
 Of strength and arms bereft, as of the day ?

Or think'st thou, brother, that inert we lie,
 Because no bolts we scatter through the sky,
 No thunder ours, weak ears to terrify?
 Say, is it not enough that unto me
 Awarded in the third and last degree
 The lot should fall, devoid of cheerful light,
 The shapeless regions of eternal night?
 While thee their Lord the zodiac's glories own,
 And stars unnumber'd burn about thy throne?
 But must the genial couch be still denied?
 Shall happy Neptune boast his Ocean Bride,
 And when—thy thunders o'er—thou sink'st to rest,
 Shall Juno clasp thee to her kindred breast?
 (I pass thine amorous thefts—Latona's charms—
 Great Themis won—and Ceres' yielding arms—)
 Thine image wide to spread, proud Sire, be thine,
 Begirt with prosperous sons, a race divine!
 While, mourning in my desert halls, I bear
 Enduring shame, unmitigated care,
 No pledge of love, no source of comfort there?
 I wake indignant from my sluggish dream;
 I swear by Hell's inviolable stream,
 By elemental Night—my suit unheard—
 By me shall Orcus from its depths be stirr'd,

These hands shall loose the chains of Saturn old,
 Victorious Darkness shall thy Light enfold,
 And through Avernus' shades its brilliant ear be roll'd."

Searce had he spoken, when his herald past
 The starry portals; Jove hath heard, and cast
 Around His dubious thoughts, inquiring whom
 Such bridal might allure to seek the Stygian gloom.
 Nor dubious long the thought; in Henna's shade
 One daughter Ceres rear'd, one only maid;
 Lucina bless'd her with no second birth;
 Yet was that child all other children worth;
 And none might dare *her* barrenness deride,
 Whose lack of offspring Proserpine supplied.
 Her, fondling still, she follows everywhere:
 Not more the calf its lowering parent's care,
 Ere wide its feet begin the earth to throw,
 Ere curves the crescent on its budding brow.
 But now the days of maidenhood bring on
 Age not unmeet for nuptial benison;
 And tenderer thoughts in that pure mind are bred,
 And innocent wishes strive with bashful dread.
 And soon loud suitors seek the maiden's home;
 Shield-bearing Mars, and archer Phœbus come:

Mars proffers Rhodope—the bride to gain—
 Amyclæ, Delos, and his Clarian fane
 Are Phœbus' gift; for him Latona pleads,
 And rival Juno vaunts her offspring's deeds :
 In vain : for Ceres scorns them both, and, blind
 To the sad future, yet with anxious mind
 Presaging violence, by secret ways
 Her treasure to Sicilia's land conveys,
 There safer deem'd ; a land with Italy
 Erst one, till sever'd by the surging sea,
 When Nereus pour'd between his victor tides :
 A narrow strait the kindred shores divides ;
 And, fix'd triangle-wise, its cliffs maintain
 Their ceaseless warfare with th' invading main.
 Pachynus here Ionian storms repels,
 Here Afric's deep round Lilybeum swells,
 And, as th' indignant waters howl and rave,
 Pclorus trembling stems the Tuscan wave.

Eternal witness of the Giants' doom,
 There central Etna rears its rocky tomb—
 Of crush'd Enccladus the funeral pyre,
 Still breathing sulphur from his lungs of fire.
 Oft, as with strugglings fierce, with rebel might,
 He shifts his mountain load to left or right,

The deep foundations of the island rock,
 And town and rampart quiver to the shock.
 The eye alone can reach to Etna's head ;
 Above the woody girdle round it spread
 No tiller ventures, and no foot can tread.
 Now pitchy gloom it vomits forth, and shrouds
 The glorious daylight with its inborn clouds ;
 Now threatens the stars with masses hurl'd on high,
 That, plunging back, fresh fuel still supply.
 Yet, mid that raging heat, its fury knows
 To keep due compact with the circling snows ;
 And while its flames ascend, its cinders glare,
 The frost of ages sits regardless there.
 What force expansive in its caves abides,
 And whirls the fragments of its riven sides ?
 From what deep fountain flow its burning tides ?
 Is it the wind, that works its stealthy way
 Where veiny clefts the secret pass betray—
 Then strives for freedom—and at every gust
 The crumbling caverns shatters into dust ?
 Or through those sulph'rous beds th' admitted deep,
 That, swell'd by fire, uplifts the ponderous heap ?
 The Mother there her sacred pledge bestows :
 Then, fondly deeming all secure, she goes

To Phrygia's shrines, and tower-crown'd Cybele :
 On move the dragon coils—their ruler she—
 And track the parted clouds : each guiding rein
 Their foaming jaws with harmless venom stain.
 With crested front and spotted back they go,
 And scales where green and gold commingled glow.
 Now soaring high they skim the air, and now
 Descending low the nether earth they plough.
 Touch'd by those genial wheels, the teeming earth,
 Their track concealing, gives her produce birth ;
 Where'er they glide, the yellow harvests shine,
 And grace the progress of the car divine.

Now scarce is Etna seen ; and far behind
 Trinacria lessens, dim and undefined.
 How oft, alas ! do tears her check bedew !
 How oft, turn'd backward, on that fading view
 Prescient of evil does she gaze, and say—
 Farewell, loved land, than heavenly realms of day
 More precious to my soul ! from thee I part,
 To thee I trust the treasure of my heart :
 And to reward and pay thee, for thy care,
 Spontaneous harvests thy rich soil shall bear,
 No plough be needed—and the wondering swain—
 While rest his oxen—revel mid the grain.

But now her dragon yoke hath reach'd the gate
 Of that rock-temple, where in awful state
 Sits Ida's Goddess : o'er the gloomy shrine
 Depend the branches of a shadowing pine,
 Mid which—tho' storms are hush'd—the trembling cones
 Give forth the music of mysterious moans.
 Within, fanatic dances, and the sound
 Of wildest concert, pierce the halls around ;
 O'er Ida's heights the maddening influence swells,
 And Gargar's forests shudder at the yells.

As Ceres comes, the cymbal's roar is stay'd,
 No arm impels the Corybantine blade ;
 No restless hands the pipe or timbrel vex ;
 The lions gently bow their brindled necks ;
 And glad Cybelle from her seat springs down,
 And stoops—a kiss to meet—her towery crown.

This Jove had witness'd from his lofty throne,
 And thus to Venus made his counsels known.
 “Cythera's Goddess, I reveal to thee
 The secret of my cares, the firm decree,
 That Proserpine shall wed th' infernal King :
 So Fate ordain'd it—so was wont to sing
 Primeval Themis ; time conspires, and now,
 (Her mother absent from her charge) do thou

Haste to Sicania's borders, and persuade,
 With arts that never fail, the beauteous maid,
 Soon as the golden sun brings on the day,
 Abroad in happy sportiveness to stray.
 Yes, those soft fires, with which thy potent charm
 Hath oft inflamed me, other realms shall warm.
 The gloomiest shades shall feel their gentle heat ;
 Erinny's heart with throbs tumultuous beat ;
 Remotest Acheron, severest Dis,
 Shall own the power of love, and share its bliss !

Venus obeys in haste, and with her move
 Pallas, and She (so wills their parent Jove)
 Who bears the flexile bow, Arcadia's dread ;
 Their path draws brightness from th' immortal tread.
 So, messenger of evil omen, flies
 A blood-stain'd comet through the lurid skies,
 And shakes malignant from its threat'ning hair
 Portentous redness on the troubled air.
 The sailor trembles at that dismal view ;
 Its dire approach the mourning nations rue :
 For still, where seen, its baleful beams presage
 The foeman's onset, or the tempest's rage.

They reach the place, where Ceres' dwelling stands,
 The stately work of Cyclopean hands.

The ponderous gates, the threshold, and the wall,
 Cast in Vulcanian mould, were iron all :
 Pyracmon, Steropes, had ne'er bestow'd
 Such toil aforetime on a God's abode ;
 Nor e'er such blasts, by such a force impell'd,
 The strong pulsations of the bellows swell'd ;
 Nor so, mid sparkling shower, and fiery gleam,
 The wearied furnace pour'd its molten stream.
 Pure ivory deck'd its courts, its roof was brass,
 With columns tall electrum propt the mass.
 Within they hear the Maiden's tuneful strain,
 Who weaves a gift—alas ! prepared in vain—
 To greet her Mother, when she comes again.
 Creation's germs, and her paternal skies,
 Well taught to trace, the busy needle flies :
 It marks the order, which the Primal Cause
 First gave to Chaos by unerring laws.
 There every atom finds its place aright,
 There sink the heavy, and there soar the light ;
 The burning ether whirls the circling pole,
 The earth suspended rests, the ambient waters roll.
 In bright profusion varied hues combine,
 With gold the stars, the waves with purple shine ;

Gems form the coasts, and still, as art decrees,
 Upheaved in billows swell the mimic seas ;
 Awaken'd Fancy hears the breaker's shock,
 And views the sea-weed gliding from the rock.
 Five zones she adds ; the midmost fiery red,
 Where ceaseless sunbeams parch each drougthy thread ;
 And two on either hand, where human kind
 Mild regions fitted for its home may find.
 Two more at each extreme she traces, lost
 In gloomy winter, and eternal frost.
 Of Pluto and the Manes then the cell
 She paints, by fate ordain'd with them to dwell.
 Nor this without an omen : as she view'd,
 Foreboding tears her tender cheeks bedew'd.
 Next had she mark'd the path, where Ocean wound
 About the margin its majestic round,
 But, as the portal open'd, turn'd to see
 The sudden entrance of the heavenly three,
 And left th' unfinished work, while rosy shame
 Her fair face kindled with its purest flame.
 Not with those tints the Lydian artist vies,
 Her ivory steeping in Sidonian dyes.

Now sinks the sun—soft dewy Night succeeds,
 And Sleep accompanies her darkling steeds.

It is the hour when Pluto, urged by Jove,
Begins his progress to the air above.
Alecto to his car the coursers binds,
That graze the herbage where Coeytus winds,
Through gloom of Erebus that rove at will,
And, drinking sleepy draughts from Lethe's rill,
Oblivion from their tongues in ropy foam distil.
The fierce Orphnæus, in his restless might,
Swift Æthon, swifter than the arrow's flight,
Nycteus, of Hell's dark breed the first in fame,
Alastor, mark'd with Pluto's sovereign name,
Stand harness'd at the gates, and wildly neigh,
In joyous prospect of to-morrow's prey.

BOOK II.

Not yet in pure effulgence does the day
Dart o'er th' Ionian seas its steady ray :
But herald gleams amid the blue waves creep,
Their soft vibrations tremble on the deep.
Forgetting now her Mother's charge, the Maid,
Seduced by Venus, seeks the dewy shade.
Thrice, as her home she leaves, the creaking gate
Gives harsh announcement of the will of Fate ;
And thrice is heard to rise, from Etna's cone,
Foreboding doom, a melancholy groan.
These she regards not ; light of heart, and free,
She moves, and with her move the sisters three.
First Venus, joyous with successful guile,
Steps proudly on, and meditates the while
The coming deed—the triumph of her son
O'er Dis and Chaos, and the Manes won.
Idalia's brightest tiring-pins divide
Her orb'd locks ; her robe with purple dyed
A jewell'd clasp confines, which Vulcan swart
To grace his bride with curious toil had wrought.

She next, the Queen that in Lycæus reigns,
 And She, whose spear protects Pandion's fances,
 A virgin pair, together tread the ground ;
 For wood-craft one, and one for war renown'd.
 Graved on the helm that guards Tritonia's head,
 The struggling Typhon wreathes his form of dread,
 His nether half alive, his upper dead.
 High sweeping through the clouds, her brandish'd spear
 Seems like a wood its fearful growth to rear ;
 While rest as yet, beneath a veil conceal'd,
 The hissing terrors of her Gorgon shield.

But Trivia mild might pass for Phœbus well ;
 In all but sex her brother's parallel.
 The beauteous cheek and eyes were Phœbus' own ;
 Her arms were bare—on the light breezes thrown
 She gave her tresses unadorned to flow ;
 Her darts were idle, and unstrung her bow.
 Her Cretan garb was girded to the knee ;
 Moved with its movement, Delos wandered free,
 A woven island on a golden sea.

Great Ceres' daughter—now her Mother's joy—
 Too soon to work her mournful soul's annoy—
 Amidst those sisters, o'er the grassy meads
 With equal grace, and equal step proceeds.

Clothe her in arms—she wears Minerva's mien :
 With shafts provide her—'tis the huntress Queen.
 A jasper brooch her gathered vest confined :
 Ne'er had the loom more lively truth design'd ;
 Nor Art with Nature closer union made :
 There Hyperion's offspring it pourtrayed,
 Effulgent Sol, and Cynthia's lesser light,
 Alternate rulers of the day and night.
 Fond Tethys watches o'er their breathing rest,
 And soothes them cradled on her azure breast.
 Its hue the nurslings' rosy radiance shares ;
 On her right arm the Titan boy she bears ;
 Not yet oppressive with his pomp of rays,
 The virile glory of maturer days ;
 But faint as infant utterances, and low,
 His fires emitted shed their tender glow.
 His sister on the left, in eager mood,
 Drains the translucent bosom of its food,
 While hardly from her brow minutest horns protrude.
 Such is her costly garb : on either hand
 The Naids round her form their circling band,
 Who haunt thy founts, Criniseus, and abide
 Where rocks whirl down Pantagia's torrent tide.

From Gela, whence the city took its name,
 From Camarina's reedy marsh they came ;
 They came, who sport on Arethusa's brink ;
 And the strange waters of Alpheus drink.
 Above them all is Cyane supreme :
 So brightly gay the mooned targets gleam,
 As leads in triumph her fair squadrons on
 Hippolyte, that noble Amazon,
 Home from the vanquish'd North, the glorious battle won :
 What time the Getæ rued their fierce attacks,
 And frozen Tanais felt Thermodon's axe.
 Such forms the Bacchie Nymphs in Hermus lave,
 And rise resplendent from the golden wave :
 Their parent River hails the sacred rite,
 And pours his richest streams, in prodigal delight.

Pleased Henna saw them from her verdant seat,
 And 'gan the nimble Zephyrus entreat,
 Who down the valley couched with folded wing—
 “ Arise, and mark, O genial Sire of spring,
 That rulest o'er my meads, with frolic sway,
 The year bedewing as thy breezes play ;
 Mark the bright Nymphs, the Jove-born Maids, who deign
 To sport rejoicing on my grassy plain.

Come, favouring Power, and make my thickets glad,
 By thy warm breath in budding beauty clad ;
 That Hybla's self may envy as she sees,
 And own her gardens are surpass'd by these.
 The steaming incense of Panchaia's groves,
 The grateful odours that Hydaspes loves,
 The wealth Arabia's bird of ages stores
 To grace her burial, ere to life she soars,
 Haste, bring them all—and through my veins diffuse
 The vital spirit of their fragrant dews ;
 That hands divine may pluck the germs I bear,
 And heavenly brows my garlands joy to wear !”

She spake—and he, well pleased such spouse to wed,
 His pinions moist with freshest nectar spread.
 Spring blush'd beneath, where'er he turned his flight,
 The earth with verdure teem'd, with glory dight
 Heaven's vault expanded wide, serenely bright.
 The roses crimson hues contrasted met
 Dark hyacinth, and purple violet :
 With these what belt of Parthian despot vies—
 What fleecy, deep-tinctured with Assyrian dyes ?
 Less gay the plumes by Juno's bird displayed,
 Less bright the arch by changeful Iris laid,

Whose glistening curve across the skies is thrown,
And girds the rain-cloud with an emerald zone.

The plain, than all its flowers more lovely still,
Sloped gently up, and swelled into a hill :
From pumice grotts the bounding streamlets flowed,
And kissed the herbage on their downward road ;
While 'gainst the fiercest heats a shadowy grove
The cool protection of its branches wove.
There cast, though summer reigned, a wintry gloom
The Jove-loved oak, and cypress of the tomb ;
Pine meet for ships, and cornel for the fray,
With ilex honey-stored, and prescient bay :
There traced the crisped box its waving line,
There crept the ivy, and there clung the vine.

Hard by, a lake extends its waters cold,
(The name was Pergus which it took of old)
To skirt the woodland glade, whose leafy fringe
Sheds o'er its tranquil verge a paler tinge.
The still expanse, in cloudless purity,
Invites the gazer's undistracted eye
To pierce its surface, and, where calm they sleep,
Reveals the treasures of its inmost deep.

Light flies the troop along those flowery meads,
Joy wings their steps, and Cytherea leads :

Her voice is heard—"My sisters, haste away,
 While steams the air with morning's early ray;
 While mine own Star—on rapid courser borne—
 Bids silvery dews the blushing fields adorn,
 Gather with me!" she spake, and bent her low,
 And pluck'd the flower that signifies her woe.
 Nor paused the rest—through every quiet nook,
 Where flowers might bloom, their rapid way they took.
 So, at their Queen's command, descend the bees
 On Hybla's thyme, their fragrant prey to seize:
 Forth from the hollow beech their thousands pour,
 And, gaily buzzing, heap the honied store.
 Soon, soon are reft the glories of the field;
 Their spoil the violets and lilies yield:
 The scented marjoram is flowerless now,
 Fast drop the snow-flakes from the privet's bough,
 And rose-buds shine, like stars, on many a maiden brow.
 Nor thee, Narcissus, do their fingers spare,
 Nor thee, whose leaves the mournful letters wear,
 Sad Hyacinthus, famed Amyclæ's son:
 Narcissus, born in sacred Helicon.
 Both youths renown'd of old, ere flowers they grew;
 His doom the discus, his the fount, to rue.

Him with dull'd brow the Delian God deplores,
Him mourn the shatter'd reeds on lone Cephisus' shores.

She on whom plenty's Goddess rests her hope,
Toils above all, and gives her ardour scope ;
Lithe osier baskets with her plunder fills,
And twines, unconscious of impending ills,
The flowers in union sweet, to crown her head,
Predestined omen of her bridal bed.

She too—the Queen, who takes her stern delight
In clang of steel, and trumpet call to fight,
Struck by whose fatal hand whole armies fall,
Who bursts the portal, and uproots the wall—
That hand, the spear forsaking, yields to play,
And e'en her helmet wreathes with chaplets gay ;
Lulls the fierce rage of war to peaceful rest,
And tames the terrors of her gleaming crest.
Nor She who threads—where scent of game abounds—
Parthenian thickets with her eager hounds,
Their mirth disdains—content a wreath to wear,
That just confines the freedom of her hair.

As thoughtless thus they sport in maiden wise,
A bellowing sound from earth begins to rise,
And many a stately tower and gorgeous fane
Upheaved in shapeless ruin strew the plain.

The secret cause, to Venus only known,
 Blends with her fears a joy she dares not own.
 For now the Ruler of the realms of shade
 Through winding caverns hath to pass essayed—
 Where bruised Enceladus is groaning laid.
 Through all his frame the tortured giant feels
 The trampling coursers, and the grinding wheels;
 Which, deep indented, leave their smoking track,
 In sulphurous lines, along his sinewy back;
 As wild he writhes beneath the doubled load,
 Bearing at once Sicania and the God,
 And feebly with his snakes obstructs the road.

As when the miner's art, with hidden toil,
 Has worked a passage through the stubborn soil,
 Within the walls a strangely open'd gate
 Betrays the town to unexpected fate;
 From secret caves the soldiers rise to light,
 And spring, like earth-born warriors, to the fight:
 Ev'n so, resolved to find or make a way,
 The third Saturnian struggles into day:
 Rocks piled on rocks impede his wandering car,
 And guard Jove's realm with adamant bar:
 Till he, at such delays indignant grown,
 With mighty sceptre smites the solid stone.

Sicilia's caves resound—and Lipare
 Views from his forge astonish'd Vulean flee :
 The Cyclops trembling at the anvil stands,
 And drops the unfinish'd lightnings from his hands.
 They hear the clang, who wade mid Alpine snow,
 They, who their alder boats on Padus row ;
 And they, whose arms cleave Tiber's yellow foam,
 Not yet by trophies girt of conquering Rome.

So when Peneus erst, by cliffs embay'd,
 One marshy pool of drown'd Thessalia made,
 Great Neptune rose, and with resistless shock
 His trident dash'd against the barrier rock ;
 Disjoin'd from cold Olympus Ossa's peak,
 Taught the full lake its outlet there to seek ;
 And bade the river yield, as freed it ran,
 Its waters to the sea, its land to man.

When now Trinacria, by strong hand subdued,
 And burst asunder in convulsion rude,
 Had own'd with yawning cleft the God's assault,
 Confused amazement fill'd the heavenly vault ;
 The stars forgot their paths, down sank the Bear,
 Beneath forbidden seas, for very fear,
 With slow Böotes : as those steeds neigh'd loud,
 Orion trembled, and pale Atlas bow'd.

Their dusky pants the radiant light obscured,
 Which yet, to darkness used, they scarce endured ;
 But champ'd their bits, and, shrinking from the day,
 Half turn'd to Chaos from the skies away.
 But when they felt the bitter lash, and grew
 Accustom'd to the sun, more swift they flew
 Than Parthian dart, the torrent, or the wind,
 Or thoughts that hurry through an anxious mind.
 Their curbs are hot with blood : the air is faint
 With their foul breath ; the sands their foam-drops taint.
 The Nymphs disperse : sad Proserpine, convey'd
 To that dread car, implores her sisters' aid.
 Her Gorgon's visage soon Minerva bares,
 Her bow keen Delia for the strife prepares ;
 Their uncle's hateful crime their soul alarms,
 And common maidenhood incites to arms.
 He stands, as stands the lion, grimly bold,
 Above the heifer, fairest of the fold ;
 From whose rent flanks he tears his dainty food,
 Steeps his fierce claws and savage teeth in blood ;
 And treats, as loose he shakes his matted mane,
 The herdsmen's anger with a proud disdain.

Minerva cries—"O worst of all thy race,
 Imperious ruler over subjects base,

Which of Hell's daughters bade her torch inflame,
 Her goad excite thee to this deed of shame :
 That thus thou darest from thy depths to rise,
 And with Tartarean car profane the skies ?
 Seek Lethe's nymphs, unlovely though they be :
 The dismal Furies are fit brides for thee.
 Great Jove's peculiar realm forbear to haunt :
 With thine own night contented, hence ! avaunt !
 Vex not our world with bold intrusive tread,
 Nor mix the living with the buried dead !"

As on they press, nor to her menace yield,
 She smites the coursers with her Gorgon shield :
 Strives with its hissing snakes to bar the way ;
 Displays their crests outstretch'd in dread array ;
 While, poised its blow to deal, her beaming lance
 O'er the dark chariot sheds a fitful glance.
 And soon had it been hurl'd ; but Jove from heaven
 His lightning sign of peace restored hath given,
 And of permitted wedlock : witness bright
 Bear the glad flames, and sanctify the rite ;
 And the deep thunder, as it rolls among
 The parted clouds, intones its bridal song.

Then too, compell'd the rescue to forsake,
 Dian her bow restrain'd, and mourning spake.

"Farewell, a long farewell! remember thou,
 That only to superior power we bow :
 Our Sire's commandment, never disobeyed,
 Forbids the proffer of our willing aid.
 His act transfers thee to the silent crowd,
 No more to see thy sisters dear allowed,
 No more the virgins' company to keep,
 Doom'd by stern Fate to seek the gloomy deep,
 From these fair realms—and leave the stars to weep!
 My nets I fix no more, nor quiver don;
 My pleasure in Parthenian woods is gone :
 Securely there may rove the foaming boar,
 And tawny lions unmolested roar.
 For thee Táygetus, for thee shall mourn—
 No longer vocal to the hunter's horn—
 The cliffs of Mænalus, the Cynthian hill;
 And in the Delphic fane its oracle be still."

Sad Proserpine the while those coursers bear,
 Her loosen'd tresses streaming on the air :
 She beats her tender breast with frequent blows,
 And pours to heaven her unregarded woes.
 "Better hadst thou thy bolts against me hurl'd,
 Than sent me thus an exile from the world,

To the stern shades, my Sire ! O act unkind,
 Act unbeseeming a paternal mind !
 What crime hath moved thy wrath ? did I rebel,
 When Phlegra heard the battle tumult swell ?
 Was I conspiring with thy foes to heap
 The cold Olympus upon Ossa's steep ?
 What guilt is mine ? what sin did I commit,
 Thus harshly banished to th' infernal pit ?
 O ! blest their lot, to whom their captors give
 Freedom at least in sight of heaven to live :
 But I the bitter loss at once abide
 Of cheerful daylight, and my maiden pride,
 The Stygian tyrant's slave—miscall'd a bride !
 O ! flowers too well beloved ! O ! Mother wise,
 Whose counsels Venus taught me to despise —
 I call thee, Mother ! where in Ida's vales
 Resound the Lydian pipe's discordant wails ;
 Where in thine cars the blood-stain'd Galli scream,
 Where in thine eyes the Curete falchions gleam—
 O ! haste thee thence—restrain the robber's might,
 Stay the dread car, and give me back to light !”

He, as she speaks and weeps, with pity hears,
 Dries with his sable robe her decent tears ;

Sighs, fired by love, responsive to her sigh,
 And soothes with accents mild her misery.
 "Cease, cease, my Proserpine, from gloomy care,
 From terrors vain, and profitless despair.
 No common sceptre is it thine to grasp,
 No common husband's arms thy beauties clasp :
 'Tis I, the Ruler of Saturnian race,
 Lord of the mighty void's illimitable space !
 Another world is ours, another day—
 Our stars as brilliant shed as pure a ray :
 Beneath the beams of our Elysian sun,
 Their pious course a happy people run—
 And through an endless age of gold we prove
 A blest continuance of the joys above.
 Soft meads shall still be thine—soft breezes blow
 O'er flowers more fair than on thy Henna grow ;
 And, mid the darksome woods, a golden tree
 Its boughs' rich burthen consecrate to thee.
 Perpetual Autumn shall its stores renew
 Of glowing fruits—but these are scant and few,
 Compared with that immense, unending birth
 Of creatures, air-produced, or nursed on earth,
 With whom the glassy deeps of ocean teem,
 Who sport by myriads in the marsh and stream ;

All duly subject to thy sovereign sway,
 That live and breathe beneath the lunar ray—
 Beneath that orb, which, nearest of the seven,
 Divides things mortal from th' eternal heaven.
 Proud purple kings shall kneel before thy throne,
 Mix'd with the poor, their pomp, their glory gone :
 All vain distinctions levelled by the grave,
 Thy righteous sentence shall condemn or save ;
 And thou—the secrets of their hearts confest—
 Adjudge the sinner woe, the godly rest.
 On thee the duteous Destinies shall wait,
 Thy rule be boundless, and thy will be fate !''

This said, he gave his joyful steeds the rein,
 And sought, in milder mood, his realm again.
 About him throng the souls, in number such
 As leaves that fall at Auster's angry touch ;
 As drops that issue from a cloudy sky ;
 As waves that break, as sands that whirling fly.
 The dead of every age may there be seen,
 In haste to gaze upon their glorious Queen ;
 And he, unlike himself, moves on with smile serene.
 Vast Phlegethon to greet them rears his frame,
 His face and rugged beard distilling flame.

A chosen band unyokes the weary steeds,
 Their bits removes, and to their pasture leads ;
 While some the bridal chamber make their care,
 Its curtains and its tapestries prepare,
 And deck the lintel stone with branches fair.
 Elysian matrons round their Queen rejoice,
 Her terrors calming with their gentle voice,
 Bind her dishevell'd locks, and o'er her brow
 A veil to hide her blushes lightly throw.
 Through all the pale dominion gladness reigns ;
 The murky silence yields to festive strains :
 The Shades and Manes, from their tombs released,
 With crowns adorn'd, attend the genial feast.
 Beneath the lash no tortured sinners howl ;
 Night grows less dark, and Erebus less foul ;
 Indulgent Minos gives his urn repose,
 And grants a respite from Tartarean woes.
 No more Ixion whirls upon his wheel,
 The lips of Tantalus the waters feel :
 Awhile may Tityus lift his members vast,
 That o'er nine acres broad their covering cast :
 Awhile the vulture leaves his heart's repast—
 Unwilling leaves it—and, with anger grim,
 Beholds the fibres grow, but not for him.

In pledge of amnesty to every soul,
 The calm'd Eumenides prepare the bowl,
 Drop their wild tresses o'er the goblet's brink,
 And, ere they drain it, give their serpents drink ;
 With songs of peace their threat'ning fury tame,
 And light their torches at another flame.

Then birds unharm'd o'er dark Avernus flew,
 No deadly vapours forth Amsanctus blew ;
 The torrent ceased to rage, the gulph was hush'd ;
 From Acheron a milky fountain gush'd :
 Cocytus deck'd him with an ivy crown,
 And pour'd apace Lenean nectar down.

Now breaks stern Lachesis no vital thread ;
 No rites are marr'd by wailings for the dead :
 Death stalks not now on earth with footsteps dire :
 No parents weep around their children's pyre :
 The sailor sinks not in the stormy main,
 The soldier bleeds not on the battle plain :
 The cities seek for growing numbers room,
 In blest exemption from the stroke of doom.
 Old Charon rows an empty bark along,
 And, crown'd with reeds, relaxes in a song.

And now *its* Hesper lights the world of shade ;
 Now to her chamber door is led the Maid :

Where, clothed in starry robes, majestic Night
Presides to sanctify the binding rite.
As rests her hand upon the genial couch,
The voices of the good their joy avouch ;
And long through Pluto's halls is heard to float
Their wakeful hymn, with sweet applausive note.

“ Hail, Matron Juno ! worthiest of our love !
Hail, brother thou, and son-in-law of Jove !
Clasp'd in each other's arms, consenting steep
Your weary senses in the dews of sleep.
Accord what Nature asks ; let sons be born,
New Gods, the world predestined to adorn ;
And give to Ceres—by that hope beguiled
Of care and sorrow—children of her child.”

BOOK III.

CLOUD-cinctured Iris now, at Jove's command,
Convenes the Gods of heaven, of sea, of land.
Swift-varying tints her airy path betray,
As, Zephyr-borne, she chides the Nymphs' delay,
Evokes the ancient Rulers of the waves,
And calls the Rivers from their watery caves.
In doubt and wonder each confusedly goes,
And seeks the cause that troubles his repose.
The starry gates are oped, the seats prepared ;
The honour due to each by each is shared.
First rank the Heavenly Powers ; the next degree
Befits the lordly Nobles of the sea :
Mild Nereus' there and aged Phorcus sit,
Whose floating locks a silvery gleam emit :
Next Glaucus, with amphibious figure strange,
And Proteus, now no more intent on change.
There too the elder Rivers find their place ;
There stands of countless Streams the younger race :

On their paternal urns the Naids lean,
The mute Fauns wonder at the starry sheen.

Then from Olympus' height the Father spake :
" Once more the things of Earth my cares awake ;
Long time to deep forgetfulness consign'd,
Since the dull age, when Saturn lull'd mankind
To torpid ease : I left them then to try
The rude extremes of toil and penury,
The stings and goads of life : for them the field
Spontaneous harvests would no longer yield ;
The woods with honey flowed not, and their thirst
No wine to quench from gushing fountains burst.
It was not envy—how should envy move
The harmless natures of the Gods above ?—
It was—that luxury should not tempt from right,
Nor large abundance dim the moral sight ;
That want, stern monitress, should teach the mind
Hid paths of science step by step to find ;
That strenuous act from patient thought should spring,
And art Experience to perfection bring.
And yet for this a tyrant am I styled,
And Nature mourns her wrong'd and suffering child :
The change from Saturn's milder rule deplores,
And calls me niggard of her boundless stores ;

Imputes to me the growth of weed and thorn,
 And asks, why scanty fruits the year adorn?
 Why She, the Mother once to mortals dear,
 Is now their step-dame, bitter and severe?
 Why to those children was it ever given
 To lift the head, and draw the soul from heaven—
 Condemned at last like beasts to range the wood,
 With mast and acorns for their common food?
 Is this degraded life the life of man?
 Nor ceased the plaint—till I at last began
 To feel compassion for the world, intent
 On rescuing all from such base nourishment.
 And this have I devised—that Ceres, taught
 The secret of her loss, with grief distraught,
 Should haste to leave, mid Ida's hills afar,
 Her Phrygian Mother, and their lion car;
 And, wildly wandering over land and main,
 Should some faint traces of the Maid obtain,
 And so encouraged on her course proceed,
 To shower on all the precious boon they need;
 Rich harvests to diffuse, unknown before,
 And teach her dragon yoke to plough th' Actean shore.
 But if to Ceres any dare betray
 The name of him who stole her child away,

I swear by heaven and earth, and by my sovereign sway,
 Which binds the worlds in concord, be it one
 Most near and dearest, sister, spouse, or son ;
 Or vaunted offspring of this ample brow,—
 Before my wrathful shield that God shall bow,
 Struck by my lightning bolt shall grovelling lie,
 Disclaim his heavenly birth, and wish to die ;
 Sink to the realm his babbling tongue reveal'd,
 And learn the woes that Tartarus can yield !
 Let this be Fate's inviolable law !”

He spake, and, nodding, moved the stars with awe.

Within the rocky, steel-resounding hill,
 Devoid of care, had Ceres linger'd still ;
 But now terrific visions of the night,
 Announcing harm, her troubled soul affright.
 With every dream lost Proserpine is blent ;
 Now her own breast by cruel knives is rent :
 Now clothed in funeral garb her form is seen,
 And sterile aspens in her courts are green.
 At home a favourite laurel throve, and spread
 Its modest shelter o'er the virgin's bed.
 This prostrate next she views—a shapeless trunk—
 And low in dust its shatter'd foliage sunk :

Then learns its fate, as weeping Dryads tell,
 "Hewn down by Furies with the axe of hell!"

Next she herself, with emblems veil'd no more,
 Her own sad message to her Mother bore ;
 Whose sleeping senses view'd the hapless Maid,
 Fast bound in chains, in darksome dungeon laid ;
 How changed from her, so late Sicilia's pride,
 Admired by Nymphs on Etna's flowery side !
 How soil'd the locks, once bright as brightest gold ;
 The sparkling eyes how dim—the cheek how pale and cold ;
 The snow-white limbs—the fair complexion's bloom—
 How tinged with blackness from that realm of gloom !
 "Scarce do I know my child," the Mother said,
 "And oh ! what crime can thus be visited !
 Whence is that withering blight ? what Power on me
 Can wreak, through her, its wanton cruelty ?
 Why should those tender arms such fetters bind,
 For savage beasts—and scarce for them—design'd ?
 Do I thyself behold—or shadows mock my mind ?"

The Maid replied—"O worse than lioness,
 Thy child forsaking in her dire distress—
 What strange neglect hath blotted out the name,
 Which once so sweetly to thy spirit came ?

Yes ! once was Proserpine thy sole delight :
 Now, as thou seest, enchain'd in blackest night,
 Enduring torments ; while, with choral song,
 Thou proudly passest Phrygia's towns among.
 O ! if one spark of love still warms thy heart,
 And—not a tigress fell—but—thou my Mother art,
 Release thy suppliant from this dungeon drear ;
 Or—that denied—be thou my comfort *here !*"

She spake, and strove to raise her trembling hands ;
 The load of iron her attempt withstands,
 And its loud clang the Matron's slumber breaks :
 She, pleased to find it but a dream, awakes ;
 Yet grieved her dear one's fond embrace to lose,
 In frantic haste to great Cybelle goes,
 And thus accosts her : " Here no more I stay ;
 O, holy Mother, I am call'd away
 By sacred duty to the pledge I left
 Exposed to guile, of guardianship bereft.
 My palace halls the Cyclops forged in vain ;
 Wide-spreading rumour tells what they contain :
 Trinacria fails to hide the cherish'd pile ;
 Too known, too famous is the noble isle.
 Some humbler resting-place my soul desires,
 Apart from Etna's roar, and penal fires.

Each night some dream of ill my couch attends,
 No weary day without itsomen ends ;
 My wheaten crown drops ever from my brows,
 A sanguine stream from my full bosom flows ;
 Tears bathe my cheeks, and will not be suppress ;
 My hands unbidden beat my wondering breast.
 I sound the pipe—it breathes a funeral moan ;
 I strike the timbrel—grief is in its tone.
 Ah me ! I fear these auguries are true,
 And I my long delays am doom'd to rue !”

“ Discard thy terrors,” Cybele replies,
 “ Nor deem that Jove immersed in torpor lies :
 Around thy charge his guardian lightnings burn ;
 Yet go, and soon with tranquil mind return.”

She hears, and leaves the temple—but her soul
 Finds the swift chariot’s wheels too slowly roll :
 With needless blows she speeds her dragons’ flight,
 And Sicily would reach, e’er Ida fades from sight.
 Her fears all hope destroy : so chafes the bird,
 Whose nest the ash’s pendent branches gird :
 Food for her young to seek compell’d to roam,
 She doubts and wonders what may chance at home :
 The blast may dash her fragile dwelling down—
 Some snake invade it, or some prying clown.

Arrived, the Goddess views her desert hall,
The doors thrown backward to the gloomy wall,
And grief and silence reigning over all :
Worse than her worst forebodings ! wild she tears
Her robe, her hair, her crown of golden ears :
Her tears are choked, her voice, her breath is still ;
Deep in her bones she feels the marrow thrill :
And wanders on, with weak unsteady gait,
Through vacant courts, and chambers desolate ;
Till meets her eyes at length the straggling weft,
Which there the Maiden uncompleted left ;
Whilst a bold spider's sacrilegious line
Fills the void spaces of that work divine.
But still she moans not, still no tears are shed ;
In mute complaint she kisses every thread :
The ball of wool, the needle, or the toy,
The virgin's graver task, or playful joy,
Whate'er *her* hands have touch'd, she fondly grasps,
And, as herself it were, to her sad bosom clasps :
Explores with eager eyes her bower's retreat,
Her couch of slumber, and her daily seat.
So stands the shepherd o'er his empty fold,
His sheep the prey of Lybian lions bold,
Or driven to fill some sturdy robber's hold ;

While he, too late returning, scours the plain,
And calls, and listens for their bleat in vain.

Next hid in dark recess the Goddess found
The nymph Electra prostrate on the ground,
Her daughter's nurse, 'mong Ocean maids renown'd.
With all a parent's love, and tender care,
She oft the infant from its cradle bare,
To shew great Jove his child, and joy'd to see
Its blithesome sportings on its Father's knee.
This second mother, this companion tried,
Who scarce had ever left the virgin's side,
Her grey locks torn and mingled with the dust,
Mourn'd her lost charge, her violated trust.

Then curb'd no more was Ceres' mighty grief,
But found in sighs and hasty words relief.
"Whence comes this death-like void? whose spoil am I?
Doth yet my consort live, and rule the sky?
Or are the daring Titans lords on high?
Hath strong Typhæus burst Inarime?
Or, starting from Vesuvian bondage free,
Hath Aleyon waded through the Tyrrhene sea?
Enecladus, from Etna's jaws let loose,
Appear'd with hundred-handed Briareus

Within my dwelling? tell, O tell me where
 Is that poor child, committed to thy care;
 Where the swift Sirens—Cyane—and all
 The thousand nymphs attendant at her call?
 Alas—for faith misplaced, and trust betrayed!”

The sad nurse trembled, and awhile delay'd;
 Ashamed to tell the little that she knew,
 And dreading worse than death that mother's face to view.
 The woe was certain; but its cause unknown:
 At length she spake in hesitating tone.
 “Would that the giant brood, which fills thy thought,
 Whose task is mischief, had this mischief wrought.
 To unsuspected quarters turn thine eyes;
 Think, if thou canst, thy sister Deities
 On thee and thine have heap'd this load of woes,
 And seek in heaven, not Phlegra, for thy foes!
 Long time the Maiden thy commandment kept;
 She lived in comfort, and in peace she slept;
 Nor e'er, to seek the groves, thy threshold overstept.
 When o'er her favourite loom she labour'd long,
 The Sirens soothed her with their gentle song:
 With me conversing, she beguiled the day,
 I watch'd her slumbers, and I shared her play.

So pass'd the hours, when lo! the Cyprian dame,
 Her guide unknown, to our retirement came :
 And, lest her visit might suspected be,
 Phœbe and Pallas bore her company.
 What smiles, what joy she feign'd with treacherous art !
 Cft call'd her sister, press'd her to her heart,
 And blamed the Mother strict, who doom'd a Maid
 So fair to languish in the secret shade,
 Shut out from converse with the Powers above,
 And banish'd far from the bright realm of Jove !
 Our novice now, rejoicing in her bane,
 Heap'd the full feast, the nectar pour'd amain ;
 Diana's garments to her limbs applied,
 Diana's bow with supple fingers tried :
 Then 'neath Minerva's helm her locks conceal'd,
 And strove to guard her with the mighty shield.
 The Goddess wise approves her jocund play ;
 But Venus now malignly leads the way
 To speak of Henna, and it's flowers renown'd,
 That bloom with spring's eternal beauty crown'd.
 " Is it indeed the truth, as runs the tale,
 That winter never smites that favoured vale—
 That month by month fresh roses deck the scene,
 And still the meadows and the woods are green ?

What joy were mine that pleasant spot to view—
 What joy to wander through its paths with you !”
 As drops persuasion from those glowing lips,
 The Maiden’s soul is fired,—away she trips,
 Scorning my prayers, where youth and pleasure lead,
 In haste to seek that ever-verdant mead.
 She trusts her sisters ; and I grieve in vain !
 The Nymphs, her handmaids, follow in her train.

When breaks the dewy morn, serenely bright,
 While drink the violets, and the fields are white,
 They roam the glades, and cull the moisten’d flowers,
 Till the high sun brings on the mid-day hours.
 Then sudden night prevails ! the island feels
 The tramp of horse-hoofs, and the clang of wheels,
 And greatly trembles : none the driver knows ;
 On, like a deadly blast, or death itself, he goes.
 Drips from his car a blighting venom down ;
 The streamlets fail—the grass is sere and brown !
 Touched by his breath, the flowrets withering lie :
 The drooping lilies shrink, the roses die.
 Then, wheeling round, retire the thundering steeds ;
 The darkness with them, which they brought, recedes.
 Light shines again ; but where is Proserpine ?
 The Goddesses—accomplish’d their design—

Are fled : we gaze, and search around, and soon
 We light on Cyane, in deadly swoon,
 With blacken'd garland—who, too rashly near,
 Had cross'd the path of that dread charioteer.
 We ask, 'The horses—what resembled they?
 And who their guider?' She can nothing say;
 The poison melts her very soul away.
 Her hair and all her frame soft dews distil;
 She bathes our feet, dissolved into a rill!
 The rest disperse : upborne on rapid wings,
 The Siren band around Pelorus clings;
 Inflamed henceforward with a baleful fire,
 Adapts to wicked ends the dulcet lyre;
 Arrests the progress of the passing oar,
 And chains the seaman to that fatal shore.
 I to my age and grief am left alone!"

The Goddess hears—but seems, as senseless grown,
 Yet more to fear than feel her misery :
 At length—with mind resolved, and flashing eye,
 She burns to rush against the Powers on high.
 So fierce the tigress makes Niphates ring,
 Whose whelps for pastime to the Persian King
 Some trembling horseman bears : she darts behind,
 More rapid than her mate—the Western Wind :

Her spots of glowing green reveal her ire ;
 Now on her foe she nigher springs and nigher—
 Then stops—her mirror'd form arrested to admire.
 E'en so the Mother round Olympus raves,
 Proclaims her wrongs, and restitution craves.
 “ 'Tis I, no daughter of a wandering Stream—
 No vulgar Dryad : to the Lord supreme,
 The mighty Saturn, me Cybelle bare.
 But none may now the rights of Godhead share—
 All law—all rule is ended : to be good
 Avails not : Venus walks in hardihood,
 Loosed from her Lemnian net, in sight of all :
 But made more bold by that degrading fall !
 And ye, whose virgin dignity disdains
 Each thought and act that sensual passion stains,
 Are ye, with fond and undiscerning mind,
 Link'd to the shameless, to the robber join'd ?
 O worthy pair—to whom on Scythia's shore
 Should barbarous altars reek with human gore—
 Say when the victim of your wrath was heard
 To speak against you but an idle word ?
 When sought she Dian from her woods to drive—
 When in Minerva's battle fields to strive—

Your converse grave when dared she to molest—
 Or mar your pleasures—an unbidden guest?
 Hid in Trinaeria's isle, and far away,
 On none intruding, harming none, she lay :
 Seclusion vain—and life of useless ease—
 That might not envy's bitter spite appease !”

She spake : they, mindful of their Sire's behest,
 Their thoughts by weeping—not by words—express'd ;
 Or knowledge of the fatal chance denied :
 She, much perplex'd, abating of her pride,
 Her warmth repress'd, and—“ O, forgive me,” cried,
 “ If, urged too far, a mother's fond desire
 Her speech inflamed with unbecoming fire.
 A suppliant at your knees I lay me low ;
 O give the wretched but her doom to know :
 The worst, when known, admits of some relief ;
 To Fate, not malice, let me owe my grief.
 Indulge a parent in one only look :
 I redemand not aught the robber took :
 His act I sanction, whosoe'er he be :
 His spoil be his, without a fear of me.
 But if, by compact bound, my suit you spurn,
 Of thee, Latona, I the truth may learn,

Perchance by Dian told—'twas thine to prove
 A mother's pangs, and fears, and all a mother's love ;
 For two fair children thou—as I for one :
 So be thou blest for ever in thy Son,
 Bright-hair'd Apollo, and thy days go by
 In peaceful gladness—happier far than I !”

Alas ! alas ! with tears on every face,
 In mournful silence, lo ! they quit the place !
 O hapless Mother, why delay so long ?
 Thou seest the Heavens conspire to do thee wrong :
 Act for thyself, and take thy devious way,
 Where earth and seas expand beneath the day.
 No rest, no slumber to thine eyes allow ;
 Uncheck'd, unwearied, seek thy daughter *thou* !
 “ Yes ! I will seek her mid th' Iberian waves,
 Search through the deep Red Sea its coral caves :
 Where foam the shifting Syrtes seek the lost,
 O'er ice-bound Rhine, Riphæan realms of frost ;
 To the far borders of the South will go,
 Will pierce where Boreas rears his halls of snow :
 Will gaze from Atlas o'er the western brine,
 And bid my torches on Hydaspes shine.
 Unpitying Jove shall mark the wanderer's tread,
 Till Juno triumph o'er her rival dead.

Yes, in your heaven, where proud ye reign, exult ;
 Poor vanquish'd Ceres and her child insult !"

She spake, and sought, on Etna's woody side,
 For brands, whose flame her nightly toil might guide.
 By golden Acis' bank a grove arose,
 Acis, whose stream fair Galatea chose
 Full oft to bathe in rather than the sea :
 A tangled grove—and dense with many a tree,
 It climb'd up Etna's flanks—'twas there, men say,
 That Jove, victorious from the mighty fray,
 His blood-stain'd shield and captured trophies laid,
 And clothed with Phlegra's spoils the branchy glade.
 There hang the giant limbs, the grinning jaws,
 The face, whose threatening scowl the gazer awes :
 Huge bones of serpents into heaps are cast ;
 Their skins, yet rigid, roar with every blast :
 No tree but boasts some name of warrior lords ;
 This bending bears Ægeon's hundred swords,
 On that are Cœus' sable arms bestow'd,
 These ponderous Mimas and Ophion load.
 The smoking spoils of Earth's most royal son,
 Enceladus himself, a shady pine hath on ;
 Which bows beneath their weight its stature tall,
 Saved by its neighbour oak alone from fall.

Hence hath the place its guardian sanctities :
 Men fear to touch the trophies of the skies :
 No Cyclops harms its age, no flocks intrude,
 E'en Polypheme avoids the holy solitude.
 But Ceres is not stayed—no awe inspires
 That solemn scene, and but her fury fires :
 Her axe she reckless wields, intent to strike
 Through Jove's loved trees, or Jove himself, alike.
 In haste she dooms some stately pine to feel,
 Or knotless cedar, her remorseless steel ;
 Fit trunk, straight stems and arms she strives to find,
 With touch exploring, and observant mind.
 E'en so the shipwright, building on the shore
 The bark that soon, far distant waters o'er,
 Must bear the rich freight, and the gallant crew,
 Goes forth the forest's various growth to view :
 On beech or alder looks with judging eyes,
 And each, where useful, to its use applies.
 For sail-extending yards he chooses length ;
 For masts requires close grain and solid strength ;
 For oars, the toughest woods, like pliant steel ;
 And those that bear the water, for the keel.
 Two cypresses adorn'd the neighbouring copse,
 And rear'd inviolate their lofty tops.

Not those so fair, which, from his course below,
 Admiring Simoïs views on Ida grow ;
 Nor those, where rich Orontes' waters rove,
 Which rise the glories of Apollo's grove.
 In sister beauty side by side they stood,
 And smiled together on the subject wood.
 These for her brands she chose, and, swift as thought,
 Well pleased on both in turn her will she wrought.
 With girded vest, bared arm, and brandish'd blade,
 On each fair stem her deadly blows she laid :
 With all her strength impell'd them as they yield,
 Till down they crash, recumbent on the field.
 While o'er their loss the Fauns and Dryads weep,
 She grasps them both, and up th' Etnæan steep,
 Her loose hair floating on the mountain breeze—
 Bears, as she climbs, the fresh and leafy trees.
 Nor heat, nor pathless rock her course withstands ;
 Her bold foot tramples on th' indignant sands.

So stalks Megæra, rapt by fierce desire
 To light her baleful yews with hellish fire ;
 In Cadmus' courts to sow strife's deadly seed,
 Or blast Mycenæ by some murderous deed.
 As on she moves, the startled Shades retreat ;
 Hell's floor resounds beneath her iron feet :

Till now by torrent Phlegethon she stays,
Her torch full feeding with its fiery blaze.

'Twas thus, when Ceres to the crater came,
She plunged each cypress in its jaws of flame;
All outlet closing with their bulky mass,
The flood forbidding on its way to pass.
Then raged the prison'd fires—deep thunders roll'd—
The struggling vapours would not be controll'd:
Bright glow'd the cone-crown'd tops: new ashes crowd
Etna's old heaps; the boughs are crackling loud.
These, for her nightly wanderings to provide,
She unextinct commanded to abide:
And steep'd the timber in mysterious juice,
Long time by Phœbus and the Moon in use,
Upon his steeds—her steers—their brightness to produce.

Now o'er the earth, by weary mortals hail'd,
Deep night and silence in their turn prevail'd.
Prepared her toilsome journey to commence,
Her breast she rends, and cries, departing thence,
“Not these the torches, daughter ever dear,
My mother's heart had hoped for thee to rear;
But such as gleam mid festive pomp and song,
When echoing heavens the nuptial strain prolong.
No, none amongst us, though of race divine,
Can 'scape the meshes which the Fates entwine.

How proud was I, when suitors round me press'd,
And my one child, of all that breathe the best,
Advanced my name above the fruitfulest !
My pride—my joy—my first and last delight !
My all-sufficient in thy Mother's sight !
Where thou didst bloom, I bore my godhead high,
Nor yielded Juno place, when thou wast by !
Now vile, exposed to each contemptuous gibe—
So wills thy Sire—yet why to him ascribe
These tears and griefs ? 'tis I have made thee moan,
Left to thy bitterest foes, unguarded, and alone.
I, who secure—suspecting nought of wrong—
Mid clash of joyous arms, and mystic song,
The Phrygian lions yoked, while thou wast dragg'd along.
Accept the penal wounds that mar my face,
That blood-stain'd furrows on my bosom trace,
And stamp the heartless mother with disgrace.
In what far region shall I seek thee out ?
What friendly tongue shall tell thy whereabouts ?
What tracks shall guide me in my weary way ?
What car, what robber, bore thee hence a prey ?
Is earth his dwelling, or the deep below ?
Where do his flying wheels their traces show ?
With chance-directed steps I go, I go—

(So may Dione seek for Venus lost !)
 Through days and nights of toil, nor count the cost,
 If but 'tis mine the loved one to regain,
 And thee, my daughter, to my bosom strain.
 And how behold thee ? still in beauty's pride,
 Thy soft cheek glowing with health's rosy tide —
 Or pale and wretched, as, in vision dread,
 Thou stood'st at midnight o'er my slumbering head ?”

Her footsteps now primeval Etna leave ;
 She hates the flowers that bloom'd but to deceive,
 The place accursed for so foul a deed.
 She marks the devious tracks ; where'er they lead
 Bends low her brands, their searching light lets fall ;
 But streaming tears obliterate them all.
 Next, as through air she sails, their lustre, thrown
 On some faint path, is noticed with a groan.
 Her shadow dims the waves, while, strangely bright,
 Italia, Lybia, catch the distant light.
 Etruria's shores the glancing rays return,
 The restless Syrtes glitter as they burn.
 From far amphibious Scylla sees her come,
 Half awed and shrinking to her cavern'd home ;
 Half undismayed, and eager for the fray,
 With doggish bark and howl to intercept her way.

THE PHŒNIX.

THE PHŒNIX.

BEYOND the Ind, in ocean's utmost flood
Embosom'd rests a fair and verdant wood ;
First spot that feels the breath of Phœbus' steeds,
As through the dewy gates his car proceeds,
And hears his lash, when rosy tints betray
The near arrival of the breaking day :
And, shrouded deep in pallid garb, the Night
Seeks her far refuge from the wheels of light.

In that fair region, to mankind denied,
The bird of Titan dwells in blissful pride :
From noxious contact with our world debarr'd,
The Sun's fierce splendours his unfailing guard.
A god-like bird—coeval with the skies—
Whom weary Time with life still new supplies—
Who not on common aliment is fed,
Who quaffs no draught from earthly fountain-head :
The sun's pure warmth sustains him, and the breeze
That wafts refreshment from the gentle seas.

His beaming eyes are bright with wondrous rays,
A fiery lustre round his aspect plays.
His crest a connate star to rear is seen,
The darkness piercing with its light serene.
Tyre o'er his limbs it's purple glory flings,
More swift than Zephyrs are his airy wings ;
Where azure edgings feathery flowers infold,
And each gay plume is chequer'd o'er with gold.
Not his the birth to common natures known,
Parent and offspring to himself alone ;
His frame to no progenitor is due,
Form'd from decay by fruitful death anew,
For life, which—buried oft—he still from burial drew.
For when a thousand Summers have been past,
A thousand Winters have the skies o'ercast,
As many Springs restored the grateful shade,
Which withering Autumn had in ruin laid—
Then, worn with age, by weight of years subdued,
He sinks a prey to slow decrepitude.
As some tall pine, on bleak Caucasian brow,
Compell'd at length its weary head to bow,
Breaks piecemeal up, till scarce a limb remain,
Torn by the blast, and rotted by the rain.

Now shrinks in chilly mists his languid eye,
 The star that crown'd him beams no more on high :
 So pale the Moon—by circling clouds o'erborne—
 Fades from the heavens with dim and waning horn.
 Now droop on earth the wings, through middle air
 That wont so oft their buoyant freight to bear.
 He feels his hour is come—another frame
 Must soon be his—another, yet the same—
 And, timely warn'd, betakes him to provide
 Herbs, which the warmth of summer hills has dried,
 And weaves a mass of rich Sabeian bloom,
 His future birth-place, and his present tomb :
 And there he sits, and feebly to the Sun
 Breathes in sweet strains his dying orison,
 And prays the God for such a gift of fire,
 As may new life, while it consumes, inspire.

Sol checks his course to mark the plaintive bird,
 And soothes his votary with a gentle word.
 “ Yes, here lay down thy peaceful age awhile,
 Re-born from this, misnamed thy funeral pile ;
 Put on the life which death confers once more,
 With youth invigorate, from destruction soar :
 Again thy mortal, wasted body leave,
 A new beginning, a new form receive.”

Then from his neck he shakes one golden hair,
 And smites his suppliant with its vital glare ;
 Who, willing, longing, feels the flame extend,
 And hastes to rise, rejoicing in his end.
 Lit by that heavenly dart, the fragrant pyre
 Involves the ancient in devouring fire.
 The Moon, astonish'd, hath her steers repress ;
 Awhile unmoved the polar axles rest :
 The labouring pile great Nature's heart hath stirr'd
 With fear to lose the everlasting bird :
 She bids the flames keep faith, and, as of yore,
 Th' immortal glory of the world restore.

And now with strength renew'd each member glows,
 Full through each vein the blood returning flows ;
 Along the cindery shape strange movements pass,
 Life thrills within, and plumage clothes the mass.
 But now a father—he springs forth a son—
 Next, yet not other ; second, yet but one :
 So hath the potent fire its work of wonder done !
 Whose thin partition of disjoining flame
 Two lives holds separate in a single frame.

Soon now to Nile he speeds, the sacred freight
 Of ashes, whence he sprang, to dedicate.

With joy he hastens to the Pharian plains,
 And, wrapt in herbs, conveys his prized remains.
 Unnumber'd birds attend him as he flies,
 Their gather'd armies darken all the skies :
 Not one impedes him ; all, in airy ring,
 Adore the progress of the fragrant king.
 From rage and war the kite and eagle cease ;
 They see, and reverence—and the heaven has peace.
 So, from the banks of Tigris, Parthia's Lord
 Rides stately on before his barbarous horde :
 Assyria's broider'd dyes his limbs infold,
 Gems grace his crown, his steed is curb'd with gold :
 And thus adorn'd he moves in proud delight,
 While vassal thousands own his matchless might.

In one fam'd city, Egypt loves to pay
 Her tranquil worship to the God of day.
 An hundred columns from the Theban hill
 Its temple courts with strength and beauty fill.
 'Tis said, that thither, borne on duteous wing,
 His father-load the bird is seen to bring.
 His Patron God he duly first adores,
 Then heaps the altar with his treasured stores :
 There views them burning, as the flames ascend,
 Germs of his birth, and relics of his end.

'Tis then an odour of divinest myrrh
 Steals through the fane, and, as the breezes stir—
 Soft and more soft—the far Pelusian lakes,
 A breath of Ind the raptured sense awakes,
 And, redolent of health, perfumes awhile,
 More sweet than nectar, the dark mouths of Nile.

O happy bird ! thine own surviving heir,
 Whose smouldering ashes still new life prepare ;
 To whom decay but firmer strength supplies,
 For not thyself—'tis but thine age that dies :
 Eternal witness of whate'er has been—
 All changes of the world thine eye hath seen :
 The time when ocean's waters, day by day
 Upborne, in stillness on the mountains lay :
 And that, when Phæton, in wild career,
 To conflagration doom'd the wasted year.
 Thee neither death, nor mundane ills invade,
 Safe mid destruction, fresh when all things fade ;
 For thee the Parcæ weave their webs in vain—
 Unharm'd thou art, and shalt unharm'd remain.

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THE NILE.

THE NILE.

A FRAGMENT.

THrice blest the man whose ploughshare cleaves the plain
Of fertile Egypt : he nor cloud nor rain
Invokes, nor northern blasts that coldly blow,
Nor hails the light of Iris' humid bow.
The favour'd region has no need of these ;
It scorns the showers, it recks not of the breeze ;
Content to see perpetual plenty smile
From its own waters, its redundant Nile.

Inured to heats of Cancer's burning zone,
He swiftly rushes from a source unknown ;
Long vainly sought, and undiscover'd still,
Which none have seen a fount, or issuing rill.
No witness stood by that mysterious birth,
Where other heavens o'er-arch another earth ;
Whence forth he springs his wand'ring course to run,
Where Æthiop kingdoms blacken in the sun ;
O'er the parch'd lands his cooling dews bestows,
And slakes the thirst of nations as he flows.

Of him Syene dark, and Meröe drink,
 The savage Blemyæ crowd about his brink :
 Th' unbridled Garamant, and Girrha's child,
 Strong beast-destroyer in the mountains wild,
 Whose cavern dwelling ebon boughs adorn,
 And ivory tusks, from vanquish'd monsters torn.
 They too—the tribe whose well protected hair
 With order'd shafts is set around—are there.

But why and when do those strange waters rise ?
 No melting ice upon their bosom lies,
 No helpful showers the mountain ridge supplies :
 When other streams with wintry rains increase,
 Then rests the Nile within his banks in peace :
 When they in turn scarce trickle through the sand,
 Then swells the Nile, and spreads o'er all the land.
 As though what summer reft from every river,
 'Twere Nature's use collected to deliver
 Into one Nile—that all the world might seem
 Amerced to furnish forth the mighty stream.
 And so, when Sirius arms the solar blaze,
 And heaven is burning with the potent rays,
 When the dried earth is shrunk in every vein,
 And feebly strives some moisture to retain,
 The Nile, reversing all, beholds *his* winter reign.

Then forth he bursts in high exulting mood,
And pours far wider than the seas his flood.
Th' expectant swains accept the boon he yields ;
Their oars resound along the watery fields :
While oft the shepherd—roused from noon-day sleep—
Views fold and flock borne downward to the deep.

&c. &c.



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